

FY 2019
SMALL NEPA PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

Please **do not leave any field BLANK**, unless it does not apply.
 Submit form (Word doc) electronically to jjchynoweth@fs.fed.us by **November 7, 2018**.

Project Name	Little Boulder Stream Habitat Improvement
District Name (or "Forestwide")	Palouse R.D.
County where project located?	Latah
FS Personnel Name, Phone Number and Email	Dan Kenney, dkenney@fs.fed.us , 208-476-8319; Andy Hill, Trout Unlimited, andrewhill@ecologicalresearch.net , 208-315-0907; Tiege Ulschmid, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Tiege.ulschmid@idfg.idaho.gov , 208-799-5010
Legal Location	T39N, R1W, S34, 35, & 36
District Ranger / Line Officer's Name	Stefani Spencer
Is the project associated with meeting a Forest target?	Yes. Stream habitat enhancement miles.
Which CE Category does this project fit?	36 CFR 220.6(e)(7)
At what level does the Decision Maker want the project scoped?	
Internal___ External*_X__	
Provide a list of the individuals, groups, agencies, etc. *, with their mailing address and/or email address, who will be included for <u>external</u> Scoping. DO NOT provide only a name. The default scoping list is appropriate.	

What Level of Analysis (below) does the Decision Maker want for the Project?

X **Low level:** If the project's level of public scrutiny is projected to be relatively low or unknown, the line officer chooses who we would contact for scoping (limited). In this case specialists would only do the checklist for each project. Documentation for low level analysis projects would be a completed checklist filled out by the specialists, including the name of the specialist who performed the analysis, the project name, and date it was completed. No other written documentation would be generated.

_____ **Moderate level:** If the project's level of public scrutiny is projected to be relatively moderate to high, then the line officer chooses who we would contact for scoping (a little broader). In this case, specialists would complete the checklist with the only write up being for items that are present and the rationale for the effects call. No write up would be given for items in the checklist that are not present. If the determination is no effect (which generally speaking, most CE's should have zero to very little adverse effects), then document why that determination was made in one paragraph or less. If the determination is an adverse effect, then why that determination was made would be written in less three paragraphs.

List the Management Area(s) in which your project is located.

M2 (riparian area inclusions) in an E1 matrix.

What are the desired conditions (relevant to your project) for the Management Area(s) listed above?

Forest Goal 6: Threatened and Endangered Species. Manage habitat to contribute to recovery of each T&E species...

Forest Goal 7: Fisheries. Manage the Forest's fishery streams to achieve optimum levels of fish production by...rehabilitating and improving degraded streams...

Forest Goal 10: Water Quality and Soil. Manage...stream...to protect all beneficial uses of the water, which include fisheries...

Wildlife and Fish Forest Plan Objective: Restore selected, presently degraded fish habitat through habitat improvement projects designed to achieve stated objectives ...

Management Area M2

Goals: Manage under the principles of multiple use... to the extent that water and other riparian dependent resource are protected. Evaluate...effects...resolving significant conflicts to the extent that water and other riparian dependent resources.

Wildlife and Fish Goal: ...Construct new structures to improve or restore degraded habitat.

Water and Soil Goal: Conduct watershed and stream improvements that will...enhance riparian and water resources...rehabilitate and/or mitigate...management related causes

Management Area E1

Goal: Provide optimum, sustained production of wood products...Manage a range of water quality and fish habitat potential from high fishable in several of the key anadromous and resident fish streams...

Is the project in an Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA)? Yes* **No**

If yes, which one?

Is the project in a congressionally designated area, ex. Wilderness Area, Wild & Scenic River Corridor, Research Natural Area, Historic Trail, etc.? Yes* **No**

If yes, which one(s)?

Are there Floodplains or Wetlands in the project area? **Yes** No

Are there Municipal Watersheds in the project area? Yes **No**

If yes, which one?

Is the project located in an RHCA? **Yes** No

Describe the existing condition of the project area.

Little Boulder Creek is a relatively small direct tributary to the Potlatch River and appears to support annual spawning and early rearing of steelhead, although not in every portion of the stream year-around. Long sections of the creek are intermittent in recent average to dry summers, with occasional isolated pools, and this condition lessens the productivity of the system. The other limiting factors for steelhead within the creel are poor substrate conditions (moderate to high levels of cobble embeddedness), high, flashy peak flows; bed and bank erosion; reduced floodplain access, infiltration, and storage; dropped water table; impaired riparian zone plant community; lack of stream complexity, and the paucity of spawning habitat due to poor substrate conditions. Steelhead appear to be the predominant fish species present in the stream (with a few non-salmonids present in the lower reaches) and it appears that Little Boulder Creek is capable of producing relatively high densities of juvenile (in particular, young-of-the-year) steelhead, at least in years (or periods of several years) when streamflows are suitable.

What is the Purpose and Need for the proposed action?

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve instream habitat for aquatic organisms, particularly ESA “Threatened” steelhead in the lower ~1.4 miles reaches of Little Boulder Creek (see map) through the creation of instream and riparian habitat complexity and increased pool depth/persistence. The need for the proposed project is to mitigate for the adverse effects on woody debris recruitment caused by the existence and maintenance of Forest Service system roads and historic management practices. The instream habitat would be created with structures primarily constructed by hand using on-site materials.

Describe the Proposed Action.

The project would be a cooperative effort between the District, the Clearwater-Snake Rivers Chapter (#935) of Trout Unlimited (TU), and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), and would be conducted on the lower ~1.4 miles of Little Boulder Creek. The project area is about 2 miles southeast of the town of Helmer, with all but the lowest few hundred feet of the project stream reach closely paralleled by the 3306 road (~0.6 miles) or the decommissioned remains of the upper portion of the 3306 road (~0.8 miles). The stream sections not in close proximity to open road would be accessed on foot.

The cooperators would place conifer logs, singly or in clusters of two or more, at from 10 to 30 sites in the project reach of Little Boulder Creek. In addition to log structures, the District also proposes to construct up to 20 Beaver Dam Analogs (BDAs) and up to 20 Post Assisted Log Structures (PALS) in the Little Boulder project reach. The structures would immediately and over time form dammed or scour pools, which would provide habitat diversity for aquatic organisms, particularly ESA-Threatened Snake River steelhead.

BDAs and PALS are similar instream woody structures that incorporate wooden pilings driven into the streambed to anchor woody debris; BDAs are constructed to fully span stream channels, while PALS are meant to direct streamflow to a particular portion of the active stream channel. The posts (each about 3 x 3 inches in diameter, ~4-6 feet in length, and placed 1-2 feet apart) in each structure would form a matrix around which conifer and shrub branches and trimmings would be intertwined and meshed in a manner intended to direct streamflow and collect additional woody debris. The project sites would be chosen by the cooperators for habitat characteristics, ease of access/construction, and minimization of effects to riparian vegetation. District or Forests staff would identify, fell, and trim live conifers, snags, and downed wood for use in structures, while TU volunteers (as well as Forests and IDFG staff) would carry or drag and place project woody material to the instream sites.

Exact site locations and designs for instream wood structures would be developed in the spring of 2019. Live trees and snags used for structures would typically be at least 50 feet from the Little Boulder Creek channel, and the trees would be felled with a chainsaw or toppled with a chainsaw winch or hand winch or winch/cable/strap attached to a large tree or similar sturdy object. Transportation of the woody material to the stream channel would be accomplished by hand (i.e., grasped and lifted by 2 or more persons and carried) or by skidding with a winch, strap, or cable, as would placement in the stream channel. Persons, cables, and straps could enter the bankfull channel of the stream. Untreated posts for BDAs and PALS would be fashioned from site woody material or would be purchased and carried to structure sites, and trained Forests, TU, and/or IDFG workers will use sledge hammers and an hydraulic post-driver to install stakes into the channel. The hydraulic fluid used by the post-driver is non-toxic and biodegradable. The hydraulic post-driver power pack (i.e., gasoline engine) will remain on top of bank during installation.

All wood structure sites would be cleared for special-status plant species by a Forest Service botanist and wildlife special prior to implementation and any special-status species discovered would be avoided. A cultural resources survey would also be performed and any sensitive sites would be avoided or mitigated.

The project sites would be monitored over time by the cooperators through photographs, and monitoring would also likely incorporate physical measurements and possibly fish sampling. The LWD placement part of the project is planned for late summer or fall 2019 and should take two to five days. Compliance with Clean Water Act and Idaho stream channel protection regulations would be accomplished prior to construction, as would Endangered Species Act consultation (under a programmatic format). The project would not affect access to the project area either during or following implementation.

List the Design Criteria / Mitigation Measures to be included with the Proposed Action.

As described above, trees and other woody material used in habitat structures would be those found or felled on-site, with the possible exception of untreated posts potentially used in construction of BDAs or PALS. On-site woody material would be felled/collected distant enough from Little Boulder Creek to avoid effects on passive woody material recruitment, shade, and soil disturbance to the Little Boulder Creek channel and floodplain, and Riparian Management Objectives would otherwise be enhanced or maintained.

Work would be conducted during dry and low flow conditions and would follow any terms and conditions associated with the ESA programmatic consultation.

Any required permits for disturbance of water or wetlands would be obtained prior to initiating work (Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit, Idaho Department of Water Resources Stream Alteration Permit).

BMPs for fuel storage and machine fueling would be followed to minimize the risk of a fuel spill into live water. In particular, any pile driver, saw, or winch used in woody material felling or manipulation would not be refueled while in the stream channel. Appropriate spill containment supplies would be on-site (at each site) in the event of a fuel or lubricant spill.

We will ensure all equipment is free of noxious weed seed prior to entering site. Out of channel soil disturbance should be minimal, but if advised by the District range specialist, we can reseed any areas deemed disturbed with a native seed mix and spot spray or pull weeds.

Small NEPA IDT/resource specialists are listed below. Contact them if you have any questions regarding their resource for your project.

Botany – Mike Hays, mhays01@fs.fed.us; 983-4028

Fisheries – Derrick Bawdon, dbawdon@fs.fed.us;

Heritage – Steve Lucas, slucas@fs.fed.us; 983-4040

Hydrology – Cynthia Valle, cvalle@fs.fed.us; 963-4203

Minerals – Marty Jones, martinjones@fs.fed.us; 983-5158

Recreation – Carol Hennessey, cahennessey@fs.fed.us; 935-4270

Soils – Robert Bergstrom, robertbergstrom@fs.fed.us; 963-4287

Wild and Scenic River – Chris Noyes, chnoyes@fs.fed.us; 935-4251

Wildlife – Jim Lutes, jameslutes@fs.fed.us; 963-4202